

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An organic waste material treatment process for organic waste material received in a vessel comprising the steps of:

a) subjecting the contents of the vessel to conditions under which aerobic composting of the contents of the vessel will proceed in order to raise the temperature of the contents of the vessel to ~~between 15-75°C~~ at least 50°C to promote anaerobic digestion of the contents;

b) depleting oxygen in the vessel to create conditions suitable for anaerobic digestion of the contents to proceed;

c) adding an anaerobic bacterial inoculum to the contents of the vessel;

d) anaerobically digesting the contents of the vessel;

e) separating gaseous byproducts from residues resulting from step d);

f) removing at least a portion of residual water from the vessel;

g) evenly distributing air to the residues in the vessel to create conditions suitable for aerobic composting of the residues to proceed without agitating the contents of the vessel;

h) aerobically composting the residues by action of aerobic bacteria; and

i) recovering compost resulting from step h) from the vessel.

2. (previously canceled)

3. (canceled)

4-5 (previously canceled)

6. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 1, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the vessel before commencement of step a).

7. (original) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 6, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the vessel at a pressure of between 1 - 1000 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the contents of the vessel by the air.

8. (original) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 7, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the vessel at a pressure of between 5 - 50 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the contents of the vessel by the air.

9. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 7, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the vessel at about 25 kPa above atmospheric pressure.

10. (canceled)

11-12 (previously canceled)

13. (amended) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 1, characterised in that oxygen in the vessel is depleted at step b) by sealing the vessel and ceasing administration of air to the contents of the vessel, thereby providing no further oxygen reserves for aerobic bacteria therein, thus causing the aerobic bacteria to consume the oxygen remaining in the vessel.

14-16 (previously canceled)

17. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 1, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of between 1 - 1000 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

18. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 17, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of between 5- 50 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

19. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 17, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of about 25 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

20. (canceled)

21. (canceled)

22. (previously presented). The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 1, characterised in that the compost resulting from step h) has been aerobically stabilised.

23. (currently amended) An organic waste material treatment process for organic waste material received in a plurality of interconnected vessels comprising the steps of:

a) subjecting the contents of the or each vessel to conditions under which aerobic composting of contents will proceed in order to raise the temperature of the contents to ~~between 15-75°C~~ at least 50°C to promote anaerobic digestion of the contents;

b) depleting oxygen in the or each vessel to create conditions suitable for anaerobic digestion of the contents to proceed;

c) adding water received from an interconnected vessel to the or each vessel to create conditions suitable for anaerobic digestion of the contents to proceed in the or each vessel, whereby the contents of the interconnected vessel has already undergone anaerobic digestion and the water contains an anaerobic bacterial inoculum;

d) anaerobically digesting the contents of the or each vessel;

e) separating gaseous by-products from residues resulting from step d);

f) removing at least a portion of the water from the or each vessel and transferring the portion of the water to another interconnected vessel for use in step c);

g) evenly distributing air to the residues in the or each vessel to create conditions suitable for aerobic composting of the residues to proceed without agitating the contents of the vessel;

h) aerobically composting the residues; and

i) recovering compost resulting from step h) from the or each vessel.

24 (previously canceled)

25. (canceled)

26-27 (previously canceled)

28. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 23, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the or each vessel before commencement of step a).

29. (original) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 28, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the or each vessel at a pressure of between 1 - 1000 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the contents of the or each vessel by the air.

30. (original) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 29, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the or each vessel at a pressure of between 5 - 50 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the contents of the or each vessel by the air.

31. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 29, characterised in that air is administered to the contents of the or each vessel at about 25 kPa above atmospheric pressure.

32. (canceled).

33-34 (previously canceled)

35. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 23, characterised in that oxygen in the or each vessel is depleted by sealing the or each vessel and ceasing administration of air to the contents of the or each vessel, thereby providing no further oxygen reserves for aerobic bacteria therein, thus causing the aerobic bacteria to consume the oxygen remaining in the or each vessel.

36-38 (previously canceled)

39. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 23, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of between 1 - 1000 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

40. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 39, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of between 5 - 50 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

41. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 39, characterised in that air is administered to the residues at step g) at a pressure of about 25 kPa above atmospheric pressure to ensure even penetration of the residues by the air.

42. (canceled)

43. (canceled)

44. (previously presented) The organic waste material treatment process according to claim 23, characterised in that the compost resulting from step h) has been aerobically stabilised.

45. (currently amended). ~~A~~ An airtight pressurised vessel for sequential anaerobic digestion and aerobic composting of organic waste material arranged, in use, to facilitate an organic waste treatment process as claimed in claim 1, comprising a means for receiving organic waste material, first feed means for supplying water to the vessel and second feed means for supplying air to the vessel, wherein the first and second feed means are arranged to evenly distribute water and air to the organic waste material; the vessel being devoid of any internal agitation means.

46. (canceled)

47. (canceled)

48. (canceled)

49. (currently amended) The vessel according to claim 45, characterised in that the vessel is constructed to withstand and maintain internal operating pressures of between about 1 - 1000 kPa above atmospheric pressure.

50. (currently amended) The vessel according to claim 45, characterised in that the second feed means supplies pressurised air to the vessel ~~in a range~~ such that an internal operating pressure of between 1 - 1000 kPa above atmosphere pressure ~~such that~~ is maintained in the vessel and thereby the pressurised air evenly penetrates the organic waste material.

51. (currently amended) The vessel according to claim 50, characterised in that the second feed means supplies pressurised air to the vessel ~~in a range~~ such that thereby an internal operating pressure of between about 5 - 50 kPa above atmospheric pressure ~~such that the~~ is maintained in the vessel and pressurised air evenly penetrates the organic waste material.

52. (currently amended) The vessel according to claim 50, characterised in that the second feed means supplies pressurised air to the vessel ~~at~~ such that an internal operating pressure of about 25 kPa above atmospheric pressure is maintained in the vessel and thereby pressurised air evenly penetrates the organic waste material.

53. (canceled)

54. (currently amended). An apparatus arranged, in use, to facilitate an organic waste material treatment process as claimed in claim 1, comprising at least one airtight pressurised vessel for sequential anaerobic digestion and aerobic composting of organic waste material ~~as claimed in claim 45~~, wherein the or each vessel comprises a means for receiving organic waste material, first feed means for supplying water to the or each vessel and second feed means for supplying air to the or each vessel, wherein the first and second feed means are arranged to evenly distribute water and air to the organic waste material; the vessel being devoid of any internal agitation means; a first recirculation means for recirculating gases extracted from the or each vessel to a first storage means, and a second recirculation means for recirculating water extracted from the or each vessel to a second storage means or an interconnected vessel, wherein the organic waste material in the interconnected vessel is undergoing anaerobic digestion.

55. (canceled)

56 (canceled).

57. (canceled)

58. (canceled)

59 (canceled).

60. (canceled)

61. (canceled)

62. (canceled)